

## Governor Sebelius Signs Booster Seat Law

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius signed House Bill 2611 March 27 that strengthens the booster seat law for children in Kansas.

The new law, which takes effect July 1, requires children ages 4, 5, 6 and 7 who either weigh less than 80 lbs. or are shorter than 4'9" in height to be placed in an "appropriate child passenger restraining system" that meets federal guidelines.

"We have a responsibility to keep our kids safe, and that includes when they're riding in a car or truck. Seat belts aren't designed for young children, which is why they should always ride in booster seats," said Sebelius.

The new law provides for a one-year warning period (until July 1, 2007) for the booster seat requirement, which will provide public agencies time to educate parents about the importance of booster seats and allow parents time to obtain an appropriate seat. Current law requires use of a car seat until age 4 and children age 4 and older to wear adult seat belts.



**Gov. Sebelius signs House Bill 2611 in Salina on March 27 to strengthen the booster seat law for children in Kansas. Jan Stegelman, Coordinator, Safe Kids Kansas, (front row, left) watches the bill signing.**

Both the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommend booster seats for children up to age 8. A recent national study conducted by The Partners for Child Passenger Safety, a research collaboration between State Farm Insurance Companies and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, found that placing a 4-7 year old in a belt-positioning booster seat with a seat belt instead of a seat belt alone reduces the child's risk of injury by 59 percent.

"In the last 25 years since the current child passenger safety law was passed, we have learned a lot about protecting children in motor vehicle crashes," said Jan Stegelman, Coordinator, Safe Kids Kansas. "We are pleased that parents and caregivers in Kansas can now rely on Kansas law to provide them with the proper guidance on how to safely transport their children." The booster seat bill passed the House on a vote of 94-27 and the Senate on a vote of 36-4.

- Continued -

Belt-positioning booster seats help protect children who are too big for child seats but too physically immature to use an adult seat belt. A belt-positioning booster seat raises the child up so that the seat belt fits the child's body. Since children in booster seats use the adult seat belt, no installation of the seat is required. A belt-positioning booster seat not only makes a child safer, but also makes the safety belt fit better and feel better to the child.

Booster seats that meet federal safety standards and fit children from 40 to 80 lbs. are readily available for \$12-\$30 at local retailers around the state. In fact, all currently manufactured combination child safety seats will convert to a belt-positioning booster seat, so in many cases, a new seat is not even needed. Safe Kids Kansas and local community groups will continue to work with retailers to assure that adequate supplies of reasonably priced booster seats are available to Kansas parents.

The new law also provides an exemption for seating positions when there is only a lap safety belt available. Current technology provides fewer products for children needing a booster seat, but whose vehicle has only a lap safety belt available. HB 2611 also increases the fine for violation of the Child Passenger Safety Law from \$20 to \$60. This change brings the fine in line with other standard traffic violation fines, such as a stop sign violation. However, the bill contains a provision that waives the fine if a driver provides proof to the court of an appropriate child seat/ booster seat acquisition.

Safe Kids Kansas, Inc. is a nonprofit Coalition of 67 statewide organizations and businesses dedicated to preventing accidental injuries to Kansas children ages 0-14. Local coalitions and chapters are located in Allen, Anderson, Atchison, Clay, Dickinson, Doniphan, Douglas, Ellis, Ford, Franklin, Geary, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Leavenworth, Marion, Meade, Mitchell, Montgomery, Nemaha, Osage, Pottawatomie, Republic, Rice, Riley, Saline, Smith, Shawnee, Wabaunsee, Wilson and Woodson Counties, as well as the cities of Chanute, Emporia, Leavenworth, Norton, Pittsburg, the Wichita Area and the Metro Kansas City Area. Safe Kids Kansas a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations whose mission is to prevent accidental childhood injury.